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ABSTRACT

In the fall of 1994, the Industrial Technology Division at Michigan's Monroe Community College experienced its first decline in enrollment in 29 years. In response, the division chair and faculty developing a plan to increase enrollment by targeting the following populations: (1) employed adults who would like to upgrade their skills; (2) pre-engineering students who might need to fall back on technology careers; and (3) high school students. With the assistance of other faculty, staff, and administrators, an event called "A Taste of Tech" was held for 112 participants. Following a food theme, the event included creative items such as a "menu" for the event; meal tickets to track the number of "entrees," or activities, students attended; and "taste treats," or 8- to 12-minute events with hands-on activities in labs. The event served as a vehicle to get Division faculty involved in a unified activity to promote technology programs. Fall 1995 enrollment data indicated that technology enrollments increased by 6.5%, while all other enrollments dropped by 2.98%. Recommendations from evaluations of the event included scheduling the event earlier in the school year so that students can have more time to make career decisions. (TGI)

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ED 394 560

DON'T GO TO A RESTAURANT TO GET A TASTE OF TECH!

COME TO THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE!

By

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About the presenter:

Patrick J. Nedry

Pat is the Division Chair for the Industrial Technology Division and Director of Occupational Programs at Monroe County Community College, Monroe, MI. The Industrial Technology Division has programs in Architecture, Automotive Service and Automotive Engineering Technology, Drafting and CAD, Electronics, Manufacturing, and Welding.

Prior to joining MCCC in 1994, he was the Director of Training and Development for 14 years with the Aeroquip Industrial Americas Group, Aeroquip Corporation, Maumee, OH. In this role he developed, marketed, and conducted technical training programs throughout North America from the oil fields of Prudoe Bay, AK, to the cane fields of Hawaii and the Caribbean, and aboard ships and submarines of the US Navy. He has put his many years of experience in the development and marketing of technical training to work on the campus of MCCC as a Division Chair working with Technology and Occupational programs.

Earlier in his career he was an Associate Professor in the Business Department at Jackson Community College, Jackson, MI, where he received the Susan B. Anthony Award for programs developed for women in management. He also worked in industrial production for Clark Equipment Company in Battle Creek, MI for ten years. Pat is a US Army veteran, he received his BS and MA degrees from Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, MI; and he is a Certified Professional Secretary. He lives on a 9-acre 'farmette' in Northwestern Ohio in a home he and his wife built.

THE SITUATION You have been hired as the Division Chair for the Industrial Technology Division, coming on board just after the Fall Semester has started. For the first 29 years of the College's existence, enrollments grew steadily. You have great timing! For the first time in the history of the College, *overall enrollments have dipped during your first Fall Semester!*

There are five academic divisions in the College. The Industrial Technology Division has nine full-time faculty and utilizes 12-18 part-time faculty. The programs are in good shape; you have a talented faculty; and the facilities and equipment are reasonably up-to-date. In addition to learning the rigors of an academic Division Chair and inheriting a seasoned faculty who were very comfortable with the previous Chair, you see a real need to "jump start" enrollments.

The school calendar includes Fall and Winter Semesters, along with much smaller Spring and Summer Sessions. Enrollment data as you settle in is as follows. The Fall Semester is generally a bellwether. Coming off from a Tech Division *increase* of 6.76% during the most recent academic year, when the all-college credit hours were essentially flat, you now find a 2.69% *drop* in your Fall credit hours:

	All College Credit Hours	% Chg	Tech Division Credit Hours	% Chg
1991-92	63,783	--	5,311	--
1992-93	66,837	+4.79	5,226	-1.6
1993-94	66,876	+.0585	5,579	+6.76
Fall '92	30,661	--	2,631	--
Fall '93	31,413	+2.45	2,674	+1.63
Fall '94	30,391	-3.25	2,602	-2.69

THE FACULTY The faculty recognize the need to boost enrollments, as well. **The big question is: How?** Several of the faculty feel more high school seniors would pursue careers in industrial technology if they would only come for a short visit and see the equipment and activities in the various labs and shops. There are also a number of pre-engineering students on campus who won't have to take any tech courses as a part of their two-year transfer curriculum, but it is felt many will fall back on technology careers. And, even though employment rates are high, many adults would like to upgrade their skills to stay competitive with their current employers; or, change jobs.

THE CHALLENGE This was the situation when I assumed the Division Chair responsibilities in the Industrial Technology Division at Monroe County Community College,

Monroe, Michigan, in October 1994. So, how do you, as a new Division Chair, help get these various potential students on campus to look at your technology programs?

ABOUT THE COLLEGE Monroe County is located in the southeast corner of Lower Michigan, with Lake Erie to the East, Detroit to the North, and Toledo to the South. The College is located mid-way between Toledo and the "Downriver" suburbs of Detroit, with much of the county still very rural. With two good limited access highways running through the county, over 50% of the employed adults work outside the county, many in Ohio or Downriver. A lot of the industrial activity supports the automobile industry and in late 1994 and well into 1995 as this is written, employment levels were at record highs.

THE TARGETS 1) Targeting these employed adults would be the most challenging; 2) the pre-engineering students were already on campus and we could readily identify them in the enrollment records; and, 3) we have good relations with the counselors and career educators in the 10 area high schools.

A THEME We felt we needed a theme, a slogan, a *shstick*, maybe even a gimmick, to get students to campus. Career Day and Career Fair didn't have a lot of zip. We flirted with Tech Festival and TechFest, but these didn't have a lot of staying power either. One morning while driving to work, looking into a beautiful sunrise through some ice fog coming off Lake Erie, I began to ponder how to get students to 'taste' the careers in technologies. I used to live in Jackson, Michigan, and area restaurateurs had a **Taste of Jackson** where all the restaurants served small portions of their specialties. I had also attended a much larger **Taste of Detroit** with loads of delicious ethnic foods. And, while with my previous employer, we used a one-person company called **Taste of Toledo** to package gift baskets with all kinds of local items for foreign visitors. Wait a minute! Toledo. Taste. Tech. Taste. I think I have it: Taste of Tech!!

I couldn't wait to get to campus. I ran the slogan past the Division Secretary. She liked it. Then, I tried it on a couple of faculty. While not as overjoyed as I, they felt it had some promise. At our first Division Meeting to try out the theme, I also suggested we could use a food theme for the entire event. While not fully embraced yet, it was endorsed enough to have a couple of faculty work with the Division Chair, the Division Secretary, and some of the creative staff from Public Relations and Graphics to see if the idea could be developed.

THE 'KITCHEN' CABINET We convened a group of eight, sort of a 'kitchen cabinet,' to begin to develop the idea. A plant manager with whom I once worked often said, "Two heads are better than one, unless one of them is a cabbage head!" There wasn't a cabbage head or Brussels sprout in the bunch! The ideas began to hit the table: Aprons, cooks hats, menus, meal tickets, titles for the events like 'pancakes on a stick' for welding and 'electrical linguini' for automotive diagnostics.

THE PACKAGE As the event took shape we added many food service related items and references. For example, the program became a menu, and meal tickets were used to keep track of the number of entrees as students worked their way through the events.

Aprons were ordered with the **TASTE OF TECH** logo, along with chefs' hats. All faculty and staff participating in the event were decked out in aprons and hats. Some PR photos were taken with the **TASTE OF TECH** 'uniform.'

THE IDEA TAKES HOLD The idea began to take shape and faculty began to add events and play with the titles. Graphics went to work on a logo, recognizing that if we made this work, it would be used again. News releases were prepared, display ads created, a menu developed, and notices were sent to the high schools. We felt we needed an incentive to get potential students to complete the entire "meal for the mind." Many suggestions were made, but we settled on a fanny pack.

Dessert and refreshments were available for those who sampled all the 'taste treats,' a.k.a. tech events with 8- to 12-minutes of hands-on activities in the labs. During the meal, the students rotated through the labs, with faculty indicating each event completed on their meal ticket. The completed meal ticket garnered them a fanny pack and made them eligible for a drawing for an MCCC jacket or sweat shirts.

A DATE The idea was conceived in late January/early February. An early April date was chosen to try the idea. Activities and heart rates quickened as the date neared. Many things were not completed until the last minute [for example, the meal tickets were not printed until 11:00 a.m. on the day of the event, which started at 2:00 p.m.]

As another piece of the planning, we didn't want to host bus loads of students. By holding it at or near the end of the school day, it would make it possible only for those most interested to attend. With students making arrangements for their own transportation, this served as an effective screening device. We weren't after the casual traffic--we wanted those who were really committed!

THE PR A display ad was created from an 11 x 17 poster that was used to announce the event. The ads were run in a series over two weeks. In addition, a brief classified ad was prepared. After these began to run, we started to get calls inquiring about the event. Our Tech Prep Coordinator assisted us in getting out the word, and several members of the local Tech Prep Consortium expressed interest in knowing more about the **TASTE OF TECH**.

As the day for the event neared, it was suggested that we add a counselor from Admissions and a representative from Financial Aid. We did. We also had a staff person from Special Populations available. As word spread on campus, we also invited non-Technology Division faculty to participate in all or a portion of the 'meal.' Several did. Although we had targeted high school seniors, we received several calls from parents asking if their junior could attend. Of course. Four juniors attended--with a parent!

The Public Relations department was able to get reporter/photographers out from both local newspapers. Students began arriving as early as 1:45 p.m. By the end of the five-hour **TASTE OF TECH**, we had hosted 112 participants. Half of the Tech Division faculty

taught day classes, put in five hours for **TASTE OF TECH**, then taught evening classes--it was a long day, but all felt it was well worth the effort. Other Division Chairs, the Deans, other faculty and staff, and the President participated in portions of the special event. The next day in the daily paper, we made the front page, 'above the fold!' We also made the front page in the other paper--on Sunday, in COLOR! Both articles featured pictures of the students--just as we had hoped!

AFTER THE ACTION On our campus, *Taste of Tech* eventually became **TASTE OF TECH**, all caps and bolded! The event served as a vehicle to get Technology Division faculty involved in a unified activity to promote all our tech programs. And, several other people and functions pulled together in a genuine team effort to make it all happen.

Follow-up enrollment data is displayed below. The numbers indicate a 6.5% *increase* in tech enrollments, when the all college numbers *dropped* by 2.98%.

	All College Credit Hours	% Chg	Tech Division Credit Hours	% Chg
1991-92	63,783	--	5,311	--
1992-93	66,837	+4.79	5,226	-1.6
1993-94	66,876	+.0585	5,579	+6.76
1994-95	62,829	-6.05	5,673	+1.69
Fall '92	30,661	--	2,631	--
Fall '93	31,413	+2.45	2,674	+1.63
Fall '94	30,391	-3.25	2,602	-2.69
Fall '95	29,486	-2.98	2,772	+6.53

FEEDBACK AND FOLLOW-UP Did **TASTE OF TECH** account for the reversal of credit hour decline in the Industrial Technology Division of MCCC while total credit hours dropped? We can't be certain. But, the anecdotal evidence shared by faculty early in the first semester where we would see the pay off [Fall '95] have reported that several students stated, 'the reason they are here is because of what they saw during **TASTE OF TECH!**'

Based on feedback from participants, counselors, high school career educators, and parents, it was felt it would give students more time to make career decisions if we held the event earlier in the school year. By the April date, many students had already made decisions regarding their plans after high school. So, plans are being made to host the *Second* **TASTE OF TECH** in November 1995. This time, some of the faculty from the Business Division will be 'serving' a sample of their new PC networking technician program and computer programming offerings. In another example of cross-functional teaming, the business faculty are a part of **TASTE OF TECH** rather than hosting a separate BUSINESS BUFFET!

The menus have been modified and most of the up-front work has only required some "tweaking" to get ready this time. One of the target groups we overlooked was the adult education population served by the K-12 districts in the county. The Adult Education Directors have been identified and included in the PR effort this time.

Another change we made--the *white aprons* with maroon logos [our school colors] didn't work so well in welding and the machine shop, so we have some *maroon aprons* with white logos on order this time! We are looking forward to another successful event!

SUMMARY A TASTE OF TECH event can be organized at your institution and many of the benefits realized at Monroe County Community College can be readily duplicated. [Copies of all materials were distributed during the presentation. Additional information can be obtained by contacting the presenter.]

PJN/11/10/95

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